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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

28 June 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Cambodian Suggestions

1. This memorandum outlines for your consideration some possible action courses which might ameliorate the Cambodian problem. Specifically, it includes two alternative negotiating approaches and a set of remedial actions to improve the GKR's position and image. Either of the former could be pursued in tandem with the remedial actions, but the two negotiating approaches themselves have contrary aspects.

2. These suggestions are offered in an effort to be helpful. We recognize that some of them may be overtaken by developments or events of which we are not aware. Those who put the attached package together, of course, know nothing of any discussions on Cambodia that may now be quietly in train or may have taken place during your recent sessions with Le Duc Tho in Paris.

I. ASSUMPTIONS

1. This memorandum's action suggestions are premised on the assumption that the U.S. currently has three specific objectives in Cambodia:

a. To get meaningful negotiations started which shortly produce an end to the fighting (i.e., a cease-fire) and some form of compromise political settlement.

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b. To strengthen the position and capabilities of the Phnom Penh Government (the GKR) so that the Communists have some reason to negotiate (which they would not have if the GKR were seen as collapsing) and so that Hanoi's influence over any Cambodian coalition government which emerges from the negotiations can be minimized to the extent possible. (It should be recognized, however, that there are distinct limitations -- just as there are in Laos -- to what the U.S. can accomplish in this regard.)

c. To induce the North Vietnamese to fulfill their commitment under Article 20 of the Vietnam settlement agreement and withdraw their military forces from Cambodia (as well as Laos).

2. The third objective above -- inducing the North Vietnamese to withdraw their forces -- will be achieved or not achieved primarily in the context of bilateral understandings between the U.S. and North Vietnam, and will not be further discussed here. Most North Vietnamese units now in Cambodia are not combat troops but are engaged in maintaining and operating Communist supply and infiltration routes. None of the measures which we may be able to take to influence the Cambodian situation directly will affect these units.

3. As to the other two specific U.S. objectives listed in paragraph 1, we take it for granted that more ambitious goals than these are not possible in the present situation. More ambitious goals would inevitably require a U.S. willingness to assist the Phnom Penh Government in avoiding negotiations with Sihanouk and the Hanoi-backed Khmer Communists for a considerable period, until Phnom Penh could achieve a significant improvement in its military situation and could then negotiate with the Communists

from real strength. This in turn would require a prolonged continuation of U.S. air support and substantial increases in U.S. aid -- in general a greater U.S. involvement in Cambodia for a period which would be measured in years, not months.

4. All of the action recommendations suggested below are based on the premise that an increased U.S. involvement in Cambodia for a prolonged period is not possible. Taken together, the recommendations are intended to constitute a program which at low investment of U.S. resources provides the best chance of a solution to the Cambodian problem acceptable to the U.S.

II. STRUCTURE

1. This memorandum offers three sets of action suggestions, which are contained in Annexes I, II, and III. The first two sets outline two alternative negotiating tracks or options. The last set relates to assumed objective b above -- strengthening the GKR's hand to the maximum extent feasible in the shortest possible time. The last could be implemented immediately and, if successful, would facilitate implementation of either of the two negotiation alternatives.

2. The differences between the two negotiating approaches -- outlined and argued in, respectively, Annexes I and II -- derive from contrary answers to two key questions:

a. Who should do the negotiating?

b. How should the "Sihanouk factor" be assessed and played?

Who Negotiates?

3. On the first difference:

a. The proponents of Track A (Annex I) believe that, for openers at least, the overtures to the Khmer Communists and/or Sihanouk should be made by the GKR and emissaries operating on its behalf, not by the U.S. This for two main reasons:

(1) Any direct U.S. approaches to Sihanouk would undercut the GKR's image and hand (probably fatally) and play directly to the Communists' hand. Sihanouk and the North Vietnamese want to finesse the GKR and denigrate or ignore its claims to legal existence. Hence, they want to deal directly with, and only with, the U.S. The line taken in Sihanouk's 9 April speech in Hanoi (after his publicized visit to Cambodia) and subsequent North Vietnamese propaganda suggests that the Communists are structuring a claim that Sihanouk, all along, has been Cambodia's rightful ruler, the "Lon Nol" clique is nothing but a bunch of puppet (U.S.-backed) would-be usurpers, and the Communists are in fact supporting a lawful "restoration," not a revolution. Direct U.S. dealings with or even overtures to Sihanouk would materially assist the Communists in executing this political gambit and would hence be adverse to our interests.

(2) Particularly in light of recent Congressional action, it will not be easy to strengthen the GKR. Yet unless the GKR has some solidity and substance, its adversaries have no incentive to negotiate -- they can simply sit tight on their maximum demands, wait for the GKR to unravel and collapse, then move in and take over without having made any concessions. Thus there is much to be lost and nothing to be gained in further complicating the GKR's problems by going over its head and

arranging (or bargaining away) its future in direct dealings with its adversaries. To reinforce the GKR's position, and enhance the already slim prospects of a viable deal, we should encourage it to probe the other side and, if possible, do the negotiating -- at least during the three to six months time frame which will be required (at a minimum) for our improvement steps to start showing results. If we find the GKR's viability is deteriorating rather than improving and that it is unable (and/or unwilling) to open serious negotiations, then -- but not now -- we can make our own direct approaches to Sihanouk.

b. The proponents of Track B (Annex II) argue in a different vein contending that:

(1) While the remedial actions proposed in Annex III will do no harm and are worth trying, their chances of success are not substantial. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the Phnom Penh government will be able to open negotiations on its own with any success. A direct U.S. effort to open discussions with Sihanouk is now necessary, and should look to the Chinese for support.

(2) The U.S. should present a package proposal to the other side which would offer to accept a coalition headed by Sihanouk, drop Lon Nol, and terminate U.S. military involvement in Cambodia. Anything short of this -- including Annex III's remedial actions (by them-

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selves) -- will at best only prolong the decline of the FANK and the Phnom Penh government, leaving them in an even weaker position. Eventually, the U.S. will inevitably have to take a course of action in Cambodia similar to that just outlined and the U.S. would be in a stronger position if it opted to do so now.

4. On the matter of Sihanouk:

a. Track A's advocates acknowledge that, at a minimum, Sihanouk will have to be the one (or at least one of the ones) with whom negotiations are conducted -- on Track A, by the GKR. Also, acceptance of Sihanouk as titular Chief of State may well prove to be part of the unavoidable price of any political deal. Track A's proponents, however, are very skeptical of the chances of our translating Sihanouk into a positive asset, e.g., by working behind the scenes in quiet concert with the Chinese to make him a counterweight to Khmer Communist or North Vietnamese influence and control. For one thing, Sihanouk has few supporters within Cambodia. Most of the present GKR's military and civil leaders are opposed to him, would never trust him (with reason), and would be convinced (on the basis of his past performance patterns) that despite any solemn promises he might make during the course of the negotiations, Sihanouk would settle scores at the earliest possible moment with those who deposed him and have fought against him. Few of the insurgents actively support Sihanouk

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either, and the Khmer Communist leadership certainly does not. He is useful to them as a cat's paw and front man, currently dependent on Communist backing to a degree that gives the Communists effective control over his actions, as Sihanouk himself acknowledged in his 9 April Hanoi speech. Track A's advocates believe the Communists will use and exploit Sihanouk so long as he remains their controlled instrument. The moment he shows signs of independence or of becoming a threat, they will isolate him and, neutralize him. In this view, the prospect of Sihanouk's acquiring enough personal influence and maneuver room to resume his pre-March 1970 balancing act is a chimera.

b. Track B's proponents argue that:

(1) With all the uncertainties concerning Sihanouk's behavior, we must deal with him. Efforts to maximize the role of Sihanouk and the nationalists in the current government in a coalition constitute our only viable political option to avoid full Communist domination, and at best could place the base of the current government under Sihanouk in the fashion that occurred in Laos with Souvanna Phouma. This is a strategy only the U.S. could successfully undertake.

(2) Peking and Sihanouk will probably be amenable to such a move on our part. The Chinese are probably

anxious to see the fighting stop and would like to see Sihanouk restored as an offset to North Vietnamese and Soviet influence. Hanoi could probably be pressured into agreeing to negotiations involving direct U.S.-Sihanouk contacts, having already achieved relatively unimpeded use of eastern Cambodia. The Khmer insurgents would probably also be amenable, seeing at their present stage considerable advantage in moving into one existing government administrative apparatus in the capital and other urban cities through the coalition route. Under our pressure, the present Cambodian government would probably go along.

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Vernon A. Walters
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy Director

ANNEX I

NEGOTIATING TRACK A -- THE GKR APPROACH

The specific steps suggested for the implementation of the "Track A" negotiating approach are set forth below.

1. Lon Nol's departure from the scene is a necessary prerequisite to serious negotiations. He has made it clear that he will not negotiate seriously with the Khmer Insurgents. The U.S. could perhaps pressure him to do so, but in his present mental state he would be likely to renege on any understanding with the U.S. concerning negotiations on the first occasion that a tough problem arose in the negotiations. Sihanouk and the Communists do not want to negotiate with Lon Nol. The GKR should implicitly concede them the point and see if the Communists offer anything in return. (Annex III, paragraph 2, contains our suggestions of an approach which might be taken to induce Lon Nol to leave the country.)

2. We should bring pressure to bear on the GKR to accept Sihanouk or someone from Sihanouk's entourage as a negotiating partner. Initially, the U.S. should see if it can encourage the GKR to negotiate with the Communists. Until this approach proves unworkable, we ourselves should refrain from direct U.S. overtures to Sihanouk or the Khmer Communists. The major negotiating probes of the GKR to date have been aimed at trying to find out if there are insurgent leaders who are not responsive to Hanoi. This effort should continue but in and of itself is not enough. The Khmer Communists and Hanoi are the controlling voices in the insurgent movement, and it is with them that negotiations, if they are to be more than a charade, must be undertaken. As matters now stand, this means that one way or another Sihanouk will have to play a role. Here again, a willingness to negotiate with Sihanouk would be a clear concession by the GKR. Just as on the issue of Lon Nol, this concession should be made both as an earnest of the GKR's serious intent and in order to see if the Communists would offer anything in return. Given the relative military positions of the Phnom Penh government and the Khmer Insurgents at present, it is almost inevitable that the GKR must make the first concessions to get the negotiations underway. If GKR leaders (minus Lon Nol) continue to balk at negotiating with Sihanouk, the U.S. can probably bring them into line fairly quickly by itself threatening to engage in a dialogue with Sihanouk.

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3. If GKR leaders find it personally abhorrent to deal with Sihanouk, we might urge them to accept former Prime Minister Son Sann as an intermediary. Son Sann, who is presently in Paris, has already been rejected as a negotiator by both the GKR and Sihanouk's supporters, but it is possible that the GKR would reconsider and endorse him. One avenue worth exploring is the possibility that Son Sann could return to Phnom Penh long enough to establish his credentials and, with the discreet support of the U.S., obtain the backing of the GKR for his role as intermediary. He could then travel wherever necessary -- to Peking, Paris, Hanoi or Moscow -- to engage in private discussions leading to more formal negotiations.

4. While opening a dialogue with Sihanouk and the insurgents, the GKR should continue to combat the present Chinese diplomatic offensive on behalf of Sihanouk. The U.S. should assist the GKR in this effort, in order to strengthen Phnom Penh's hand once negotiations get underway. For example, we should work to prevent this fall's General Assembly session of the UN from recognizing the RGNUC as the legitimate government of Cambodia, and to forestall any actions implying recognition of Sihanouk by the UN's subordinate agencies.

5. Acceptance of the above recommendation does not preclude our playing a variant of "sweet and sour politics." The U.S., while encouraging the GKR to combat Peking's diplomatic offensive on Sihanouk's behalf, could simultaneously explore discreetly with Peking the possibility of a compromise acceptable to Peking's interests and ours.

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